BRITISH COLUMBIA | BCStats

Infoline

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- **British Columbia's population climbs to 4,563,296 in the first quarter**
- **Retail sales in the province advanced 1.3% in April**
- **Six in ten British Columbian rated their health as "very good" or "excellent"**

Population

- **As of April 1, 2011, British Columbia's population was estimated at 4,563,296, up 1.1% from the same quarter in 2010.** Overall, BC's population grew at a rate equal to the national average (+1.1%) and sixth strongest among the provinces. Prince Edward Island (+1.5%) and Alberta (+1.5%) saw the largest population increases, while Newfoundland and Labrador (-0.3%) was the only province to register a decline. *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

- **During the first three months of 2011, the population of British Columbia increased 0.2%, largely due to net international migration.** Nearly three-quarters (73%) of all immigrant landings in British Columbia were from Asia. China was the largest source of immigrants during the first quarter, representing one fifth (21%) of all arrivals. Rounding out the top five immigrant-contributing countries were the Philippines (16%), India (11%), Korea (7%) and the United States (5%). Natural increase (the number of births less the number of deaths) also contributed to BC's population growth in the first quarter.

  British Columba saw a small net loss of people to other provinces for the first time since the second quarter of 2003. BC's largest interprovincial exchange in population was with Alberta, which resulted in a net outflow of 893 people. Manitoba (+442) and Saskatchewan (+372) provided the largest net inflows of migrants from other provinces.

  Data Source: Statistics Canada & Citizenship and Immigration Canada

The Economy

- **Retailers in British Columbia saw sales rise for the third consecutive month in April (+1.3% *seasonally adjusted*), and recorded one of the highest increases among the provinces.** Retail sales gains were seen in half of the provinces, most markedly in Alberta (+1.6%) and BC, while PEI (-3.3%) saw the most significant decline. Strong sales in the automotive sector (+1.7%) were a major factor in the overall growth in retail sales at the national level (+0.3%). *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

- **In April, the number of people collecting regular Employment Insurance (EI) benefits in BC fell to 66,950 (*seasonally adjusted*), a decrease of 3.7% from the previous month.** Nationally, the number of recipients was down 1.1% between March and April, with several provinces posting decreases.

  Between April 2010 and April 2011, the number of EI beneficiaries in the province dropped a notable 17.8%, a rate of decline second only to Alberta where the number of beneficiaries fell by one quarter (-25.6%). Nova Scotia (+1.1%) and New Brunswick (+0.6%) were the only provinces to record year-over-year increases, such that nationwide, the number of beneficiaries was down 11.3%. *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

Health

- **In 2010, six in ten British Columbians (61%) aged 12 years and older assessed their own health as either "very good" or "excellent", up two percentage points from the previous**

Report Low Income Cut-Offs (LICOs) are a Poor Measure of Poverty

Did you know...

In 2010, there were 1,783 residential fires reported in BC resulting in 64 injuries and 19 deaths.

Data Source: Office of the Fire Commissioner

year. While the share of the population that reported being diagnosed with high blood pressure (15%), asthma (8%) and diabetes (5%) remained virtually unchanged from 2009, the proportion of those who suffered from arthritis (16%) and high levels of stress (23%) was notably higher in 2010. Differences between men and women tended to be relatively minor for most health indicators. However, men (55%) were more likely than women (34%) to report height and weight values that classified their body mass index (BMI) as either overweight or obese. Arthritis rates, on the other hand, were higher among women (18%) than men (13%).

Data Source: Statistics Canada

- **Men (36% lower than the national average) and women (33%) serving in the Canadian Forces between 1972 and 2006 had a significantly lower risk of death when compared to the general population.**[1] Among male personnel, the risk of death due to respiratory disease (66%), disorders of the nervous system (62%), cardiovascular disease (56%), infectious diseases (47%) and cancer (42%) were all dramatically lower than the general population. Female personnel were less likely than other women to die of cardiovascular disease (60%) and cancer (25%). Death due to injury (not including suicide or airspace accidents) were significantly lower (23%) among male personnel, while being statistically equal to the general public among women serving in the Canadian Forces.

Data Source: SC Cat. no. 82-584X

Environment

- **Less than one quarter (23%) of British Columbian households were equipped with some type of air conditioning system in 2009.** Nationally, half (50%) of Canadian homes reported having air conditioning, with the highest proportion (80%) of households located in Manitoba, followed by Ontario (74%) and Saskatchewan (61%). Compared to the rest of the country, households in British Columbia were among the least likely to have air conditioning. Only households in Atlantic Canada reported a lower proportion (19%).

  Among those with air conditioning in BC, just half (46%) shut it off when no one was in the home. This compared with nearly two-thirds (63%) of households in Atlantic Canada and Quebec who reported that they turned off their air conditioning units when no one was home. *Data Source: SC Cat. no. 16-002-X*

The Nation

- **Canada's composite index of leading indicators rose 1.0% in May, marking the largest increase registered so far in 2011.** The manufacturing sector showed the most significant improvement from the previous month led by a 9.8% increase in new orders. The ratio of shipments to inventories continued to advance, while the average workweek lengthened for a fifth consecutive month. Housing market indicators were somewhat mixed with a decline in sales offsetting a rebound in the number of new housing starts.

  Data Source: Statistics Canada

- **National net worth rose 0.7% to $6.4 trillion, or $185,400 per capita, during the first quarter of 2011.** Net worth in the household sector advanced 1.0%. While still positive, this most recent increase is a significant slowdown from the 2.4% increase registered in the previous quarter. Household credit market debt rose faster (+1.3%) than the level of disposable income (+0.7%), pushing the ratio of credit market debt to disposable income up to 147.3%. The country's net debt to gross domestic product ratio edged higher to 45.5% as the government sector added $22 billion in liabilities to the books. Net worth in the corporate sector dropped by one-third (-33.1%) as foreign investors increased their holdings of Canadian securities, split evenly between bonds and equities. *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

[1] Does not include out-of-country deaths of Canadian citizens and, consequently, does not include combat-related deaths among Canadian Forces personnel.

For data originating from Statistics Canada, data sourced to 'Statistics Canada' has been retrieved from CANSIM, the agency's electronic database; otherwise the source is identified as 'SC' plus the catalogue number.

Infoline Report

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Low Income Cut-Offs (LICOs) are a Poor Measure of Poverty

Despite protestations from Statistics Canada that LICOs are not meant to be used as a measure of poverty, there are many groups that insist on using them for exactly that purpose. Essentially, the LICOs are meant to quantify the extent to which some Canadians are less well-off than others. As such, they measure inequality, not poverty. It is possible to be worse off than the average citizen without being poor.

LICOs are calculated by taking the percentage of income the average family spends on food, shelter and clothing (that is, necessities), then adding 20 percentage points. A family that spends that much over the average on necessities is considered to be in "straitened circumstances." The 20 percentage point figure is purely arbitrary; however, that alone is not enough to dismiss LICOs as a measure of poverty, since any definition of poverty involves some subjectivity and is therefore arbitrary in nature. However, there are other qualities of LICOs that make them a poor choice for a poverty line.

One of the biggest criticisms of LICOs is that the goal posts are constantly moving due to the relative nature of the measure. This means that no matter what actions a government takes to eradicate poverty, that goal can never be attained if LICOs are used as a benchmark. To illustrate, take a hypothetical future Canada where every citizen earns no less than $100,000 (and assume there has not been rampant inflation in the meantime, such that buying power is not dissimilar to what exists today) and millionaires are common. In that kind of Canada, those at the low end of the income scale (that is, those earning "merely" $100,000) would be considered poor if LICOs were used as a measure of poverty. While an argument can be made that the definition of poverty should change over time and be a reflection of current societal conditions, it would be a stretch to consider someone to be poor just because their neighbours can afford a yacht and they can't.

Another problem with LICOs is that they do not take into account regional differences in the cost of food, shelter and clothing. LICOs are published only for Canada, with adjustments for both size of area of residence and family size: the same cut-off is applied to a family of four in any community with a population of 500,000 or more, for example Winnipeg and Vancouver. This is of particular concern for British Columbia, where average housing prices are well above those in other parts of the country. Given that the cost of shelter comprises by far the largest portion of spending on food, shelter and clothing, this renders LICOs a dubious means of regional comparison, let alone as a measure of poverty.

Given the issues with LICOs, Statistics Canada developed the Market Basket Measure (MBM) of low income. Unlike LICOs, the MBM is not a relative measure and is instead based on the actual costs of "necessities." Unavoidably, the choice of goods and services to include in the basket is arbitrary, which has resulted in criticism of this measure as well. The MBM is designed to measure a level at which a Canadian family can enjoy a modest standard of living and the main criticism of this approach that it does not arrive at a true poverty threshold and that there is still no way to determine how many Canadians do not have the resources to cover even their basic needs.

The bottom line is that there is still no official measure of poverty in Canada and neither the LICOs nor the MBM are ideal indicators for that purpose. However, if they are all that are available, the MBM is probably the better measure.

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BC at a glance . . .

POPULATION (thousands)	Apr 1/2011	% change on one year ago
BC	4,563.3	1.1
Canada	34,349.2	1.1
GDP and INCOME (Released Nov 4)		
(BC - at market prices)	2009	% change on one year ago
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) *($ millions)*	191,006	-3.4
GDP *($ 2002 millions)*	161,851	-1.8
GDP *($ 2002 per Capita) (reflects revised pop)*	36,287	-3.5
Personal Disposable Income *($ 2002 per Capita)*	25,374	-1.9
TRADE ($ millions, seasonally adjusted)		% change on prev. month
Manufacturing Shipments - Apr 2011	3,174	-0.9
Merchandise Exports - Apr 2011	2,422	-9.1
Retail Sales - Apr 2011	4,959	1.3
CONSUMER PRICE INDEX	% change on	12-month avg
(all items - Apr 2011)	one year ago	% change
BC	2.7	1.9
Vancouver	2.6	2.2
Victoria	2.7	1.6
Canada	3.3	2.1
LABOUR FORCE (thousands)		% change on
(seasonally adjusted)	May 2011	prev. month
Jobs Created (-Lost) - BC	5.2	
Labour Force - BC	2,464.4	-0.1
Employed - BC	2,278.1	0.2
Unemployed - BC	186.3	-4.3
		Apr 2011
Unemployment Rate - BC *(percent)*	7.6	7.9
Unemployment Rate - Canada *(percent)*	7.4	7.6
INTEREST RATES (percent)	Jun 22/2011	Jun 23/2010
Prime Business Rate	3.00	2.50
Conventional Mortgages - 1 year	3.50	3.70
- 5 year	5.39	5.99
US-CANADA EXCHANGE RATE	Jun 22/2011	Jun 23/2010
(avg. noon spot rate) Cdn $ per US $	0.9726	1.0434
(closing rate) US $ per Cdn $	1.0276	0.9630
AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE RATE		% change on
(industrial aggregate - dollars)	May 2011	one year ago
BC	831.56	0.5
Canada	837.44	2.7

SOURCES:

Population, Gross Domestic Product, Trade, Prices, Labour Force, Wage Rate } Statistics Canada

Interest Rates, Exchange Rates: Bank of Canada Weekly Financial Statistics

For latest Weekly Financial Statistics see www.bankofcanada.ca

Socio-Economic Profiles 2010

The 2010 Socio-Economic Profiles are now available. These profiles present data in tables and charts on population, economic hardship, labour market, education, crime, health and risk factors for children and youth. Some special regions and the Indices should be available by the end of June.

http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/sep/choose.asp

2010 BC Apprenticeship Student Outcomes Survey Summary Report

The 2010 Apprenticeship Student Outcomes (APPSO) Survey was conducted with former students who completed the final year of their apprenticeship training in a B.C. post-secondary institution between July 1, 2008 and June 30, 2009. Approximately six months later, from January to April of 2010, 2,750 former students from 29 institutions (14 public and 15 private) participated in survey telephone interviews - the gross response rate was 56 percent. For more information on BC Student Outcomes, visit BC Student Outcomes

http://outcomes.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/Libraries/APPSO_Reports/2010_Apprenticeship_Report_pdf.pdf

File Finder

BC Stats powerful new tool to find small area data on the web site. Users can filter on an area type or a specific location, time period, product, and subject. The File Finder app is still very much under development and only a few products have been linked into it as yet, but it is already quite useful so we decided to share it with you.

http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/filefinder.asp

Released this week by BC Stats

- No subscription releases

Next week

- Business Indicators, June 2011
- Consumer Price Index, May 2011

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